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MMOZine

Issue 27 | January 2011

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates

REVIEWED

FALLEN EARTH

WELCOME TO A BRAVE NEW WORLD!

MAGIC: THE GATHERING – TACTICS + THE HISTORY OF WORLD OF WARCRAFT

+ REVIEWED

WoW: Cataclysm

Read our definitive review!

+ FIRST LOOK

The Secret World

The Secret is out!

+ PREVIEWED

Star Wars: The Old Republic

Is this the Star Wars MMO we've been looking for?

Welcome to MMOZine

Firstly, a happy new year to all our readers, both old and new. How was it for you? Did you spend most of Christmas battling the turkey and endless chocolates, or were you battling online to reach the new level cap in World of Warcraft? Either way, we all hope you had a very good one.

2011 promises to be a good one for MMOs, as there are some very big titles due out over the next few months – plus the promise of new expansions being revealed later in the year.

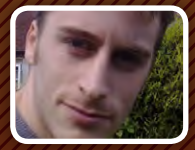
We kick off this month with a final review of Cataclysm. Yes, we wanted to wait, see how it settled in and then appraise it from that. We've also got a review of Fallen Earth and a preview of the MMO we're all waiting for: The Old Republic.

Dean Mortlock, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

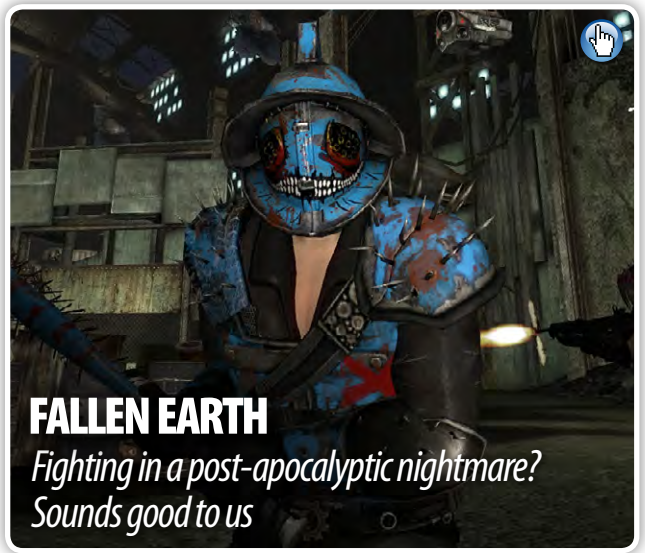
LESLEY SMITH
What she doesn't know about WoW really isn't worth knowing.



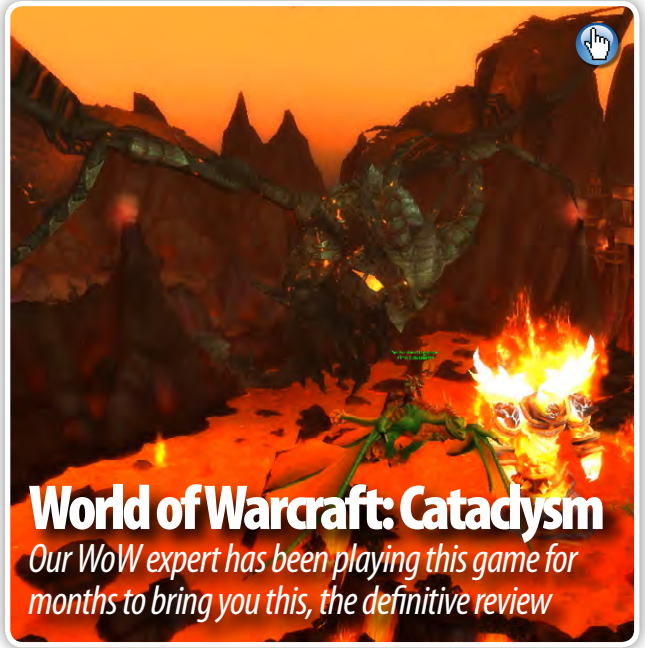
ANDY GRIFFITHS
Say hello to Andy. Our PC gaming expert also edits our sister mag, *PCGZine*.

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights…



FALLEN EARTH
Fighting in a post-apocalyptic nightmare? Sounds good to us



World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
Our WoW expert has been playing this game for months to bring you this, the definitive review

Star Wars: The Old Republic

The Secret World

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

The Secret World
Magic: The Gathering – Tactics
Xyson
Rift
Dragonica
APB Reloaded
Earthrise
World of Tanks
Everquest II
Star Wars: The Old Republic
World of Warcraft history feature
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
Fallen Earth

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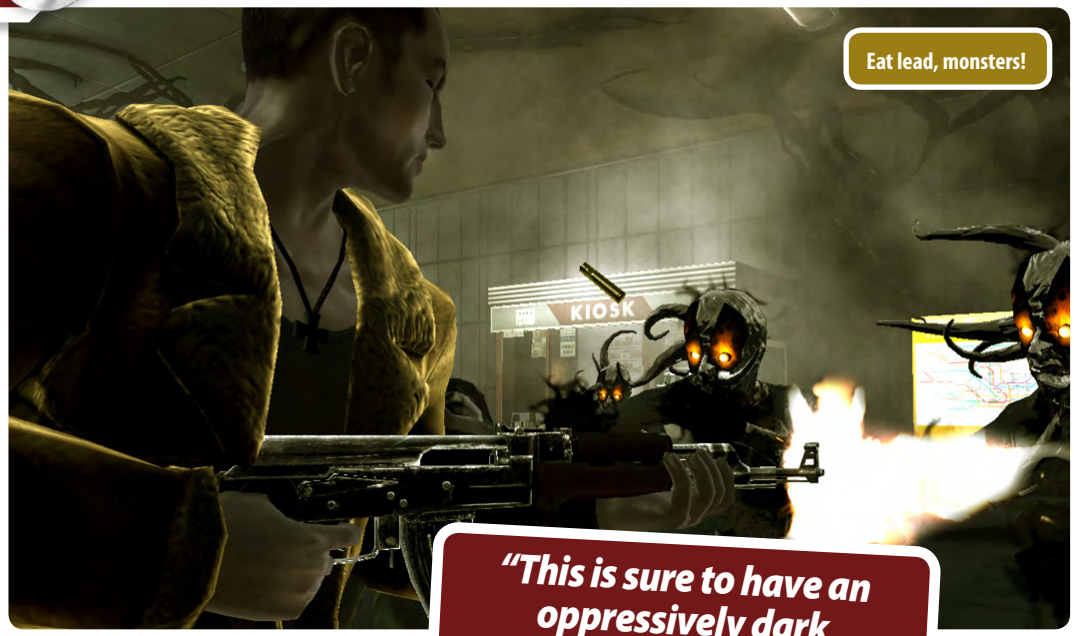
The Secret World

Freedom of expression

THE SECRET WORLD

Publisher: EA
Developer: Funcom
Heritage: Anarchy Online, Age of Conan
Link: www.darkdaysarecoming.com
ETA: TBA

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of The Secret World



Eat lead, monsters!

FIRST LOOK

What's the story?

This ground-breaking MMO from the makers of Age of Conan has been on the horizon since 2007, yet for all the delays we're still very excited to see how it all shakes down. This month a new milestone was reached with EA picking up publishing duties, waking fans up to the fact that this game is indeed still definitely coming.

What do we know?

The plot takes place in real-world locations, including London and New York, with players charged with pursuing mythical monsters for the benefit of mankind and, more importantly, which secret underground society you've enrolled in – Illuminati for the win! Taking heavy cues from the ancient and modern world, this is sure to have an oppressively dark atmosphere which centres on the everlasting battle between good and evil. Supernatural powers will feature heavily, but everything is set in the context of the real world.

"This is sure to have an oppressively dark atmosphere, which centres on the everlasting battle between good and evil"

Each of the factions featured have their mind set on world domination.

The mystical arts are always a safe bet against demons, vampires and werewolves.

When do we get more?

So much of The Secret World seems like a pipe dream, and even though we're yet to sample any actual gameplay, we still can't wait to see how it all works in practice. The MMO genre isn't known for its innovative tendencies, but at least Funcom are trying to change all that.

ALLODS
ONLINE
Most Anticipated MMO In 2009
КРИ 2009 ЛУЧШАЯ ИГРА
КРИ 2009 ПРИЗ ЗРИТЕЛЬСКИХ СИМПАТИЙ
PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED
ATTACK, DEFEND, LOOT
OR PLUNDER! SET SAIL INTO THE
ASTRAL WITH ALLODS ONLINE
Step 1. Register at allods.gPotato.eu
Step 2. Download the game client
Step 3. Install and patch the game to the latest version
Step 4. Log in with your gPotato.eu username and password
gPotato
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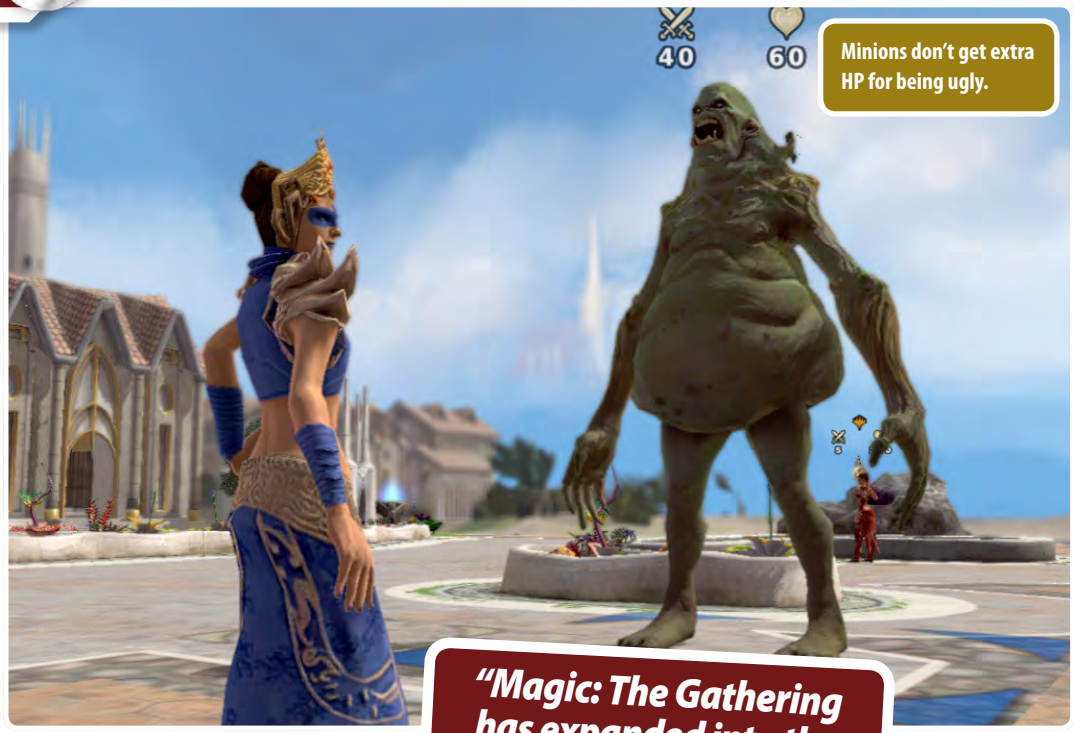
MAGIC The Gathering TACTICS

Publisher: SOE
Developer: In-house
Heritage: DC Universe Online
Link: www.magicthegathering tactics.com
ETA: 18th January

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Magic: The Gathering – Tactics



Minions don't get extra HP for being ugly.

Magic: The Gathering – Tactics

FIRST LOOK

New battlefield, old strategies

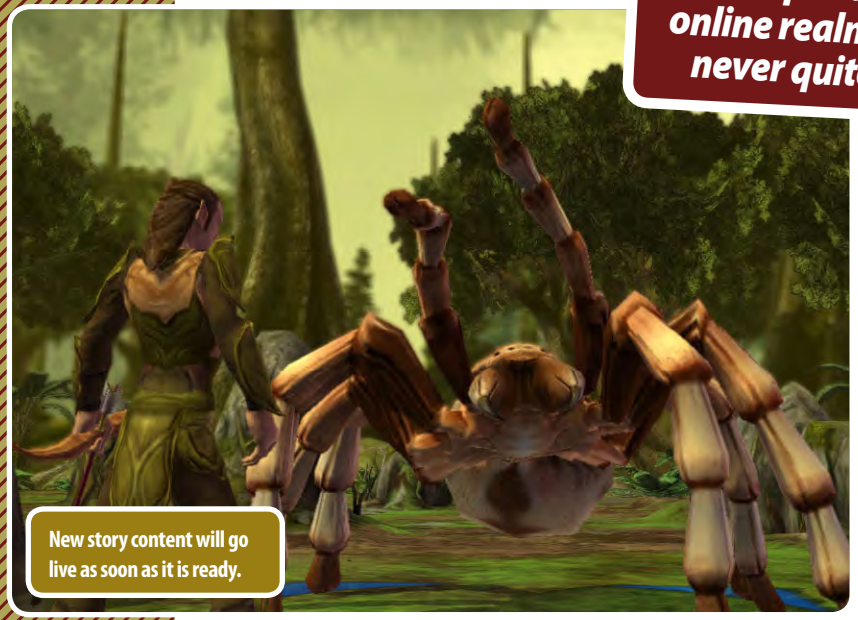
What's the story?

Card battlers have wanted to watch their creations go at it in colourful 3D for years, and thanks to Sony Online Entertainment, Magic: The Gathering players will soon have their dreams realised in a competitive free-to-play MMO. Players are placed in the boots of a customisable Planeswalker – a Mage who has the ability to wield spells and summon a wide variety of fantasy creatures – and can battle other players, as well as take part in an original campaign which will be updated with new story components over time.

What do we know?

Magic: The Gathering has expanded into the online realm before but never quite like this. The powerful new engine provides a beautiful backdrop for the tabletop-inspired battles, with characters which are expertly animated. As you might expect from this license, players can earn new skills such as Fireball, Doom Blade, Lightning and many others by purchasing packs of cards for their characters online. Combat is turn-based, with support for 1v1 and 2v2 skirmishes. Tactics definitely caters for a specific niche, but there will be a tutorial mode to welcome the uninitiated.

"Magic: The Gathering has expanded into the online realm before but never quite like this"

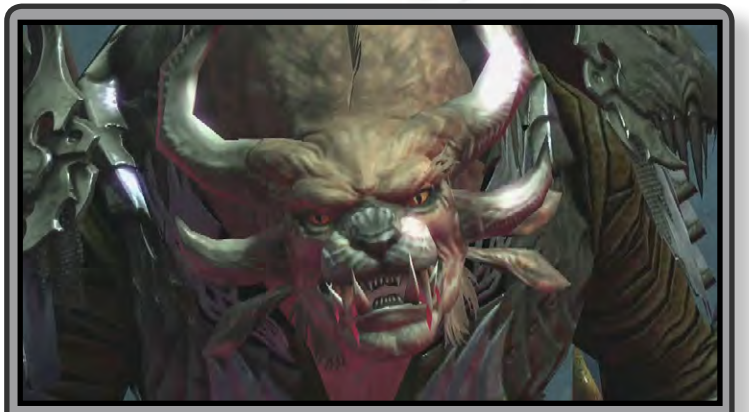

New story content will go live as soon as it is ready.

The interface is very clean and vital stats handily float above everyone's heads.

When do we get more?

This MMO will launch before the end of the month, with a PS3 version to arrive later. Expect a fulfilling and addictive experience, and a review next issue.

GUILD WARS 2 ™



PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

www.GuildWars2.com

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7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

RIFT

Developer: Trion Worlds | **ETA:** March

It seems as though we've been looking forward to this action-orientated MMO forever, but soon everyone will be able to sample RIFT, as a release date has finally been confirmed. North American and European gamers will see the game launch during the first week of March with pre-orderers offered early access. Sweet!

Xyson

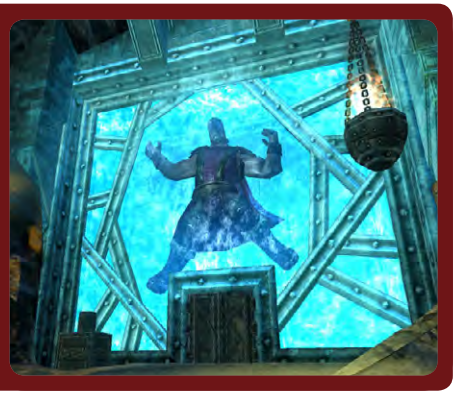
Developer: Notorious Games | **ETA:** March

Despite being another title set in the apocalyptic genre, Xyson set itself apart by allowing players to shape the environment around them permanently in the pursuit of either the world's salvation or its destruction. Despite coming from a small team this is one title not to be underestimated.

Everquest II

Developer: SOE | **ETA:** Out Now

Sony have only recently begun sending out Beta invites for their most successful MMO's next big update. Currently it's unclear what exactly 'Destiny of the Velious' includes, but at time of writing there's only 1,000 players sampling the content so it must present a radical departure.



World of Tanks

Developer: Wargaming.net | **ETA:** Q1 2011

If you thought this military MMO was a niche title think again, as over 1 million gamers have now taken part in the closed Beta in Russia, USA and Europe. Even more gamers are set to join in as the release date rapidly approaches. Who knew tanks were so popular?

Earthrise

Developer: Masthead Studios | **ETA:** February

Another MMO, another newly confirmed release date with this post apocalyptic sci-fi title heading to both digital and physical shelves in only a matter of weeks. Iceberg Interactive has picked up the publishing duties and they are teasing some special items in the boxed edition, so it be may be worth checking your favourite retailer closer to release.

ON THE RADAR

2011
- Guild Wars 2

SPRING
- Mythos

FEBRUARY
- Earthrise

JANUARY
- DC Universe Online

Dragonica

Developer: gPotato.eu | **ETA:** Out Now

The folks at gPotato seem to update their free-to-play MMOs more than any other and this month it's Dragonica's turn with 'Awakening of the Dragon'. This content pack includes three new dungeons, an entirely new land of Pagosia and a host of never-before-seen loot and monsters. Guild and party functionality has also been improved. This proposed updated is scheduled to go live early this year with even more to follow, including the introduction of a new level cap. It seems there's plenty of life left in this friendly MMO yet.

APB Reloaded

Developer: GamersFirst | **ETA:** N/A

Prepare yourself for a new year and surprisingly a new APB, as GamersFirst are promising an all-\ new experience when they relaunch Realtime World's failed venture. Not release date as of yet, but the beta is expected to launch in February.

WE'RE NOT IN AZEROTH ANYMORE

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

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TRION WORLDS

RIFT™

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Mass Effect, Baldur's Gate
Link: www.swtor.com
ETA: TBC

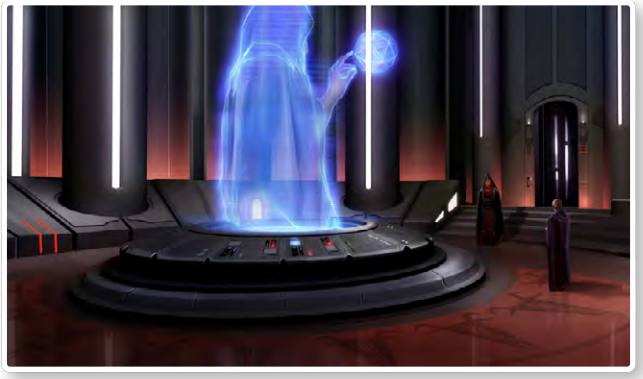
Star Wars: The Old Republic

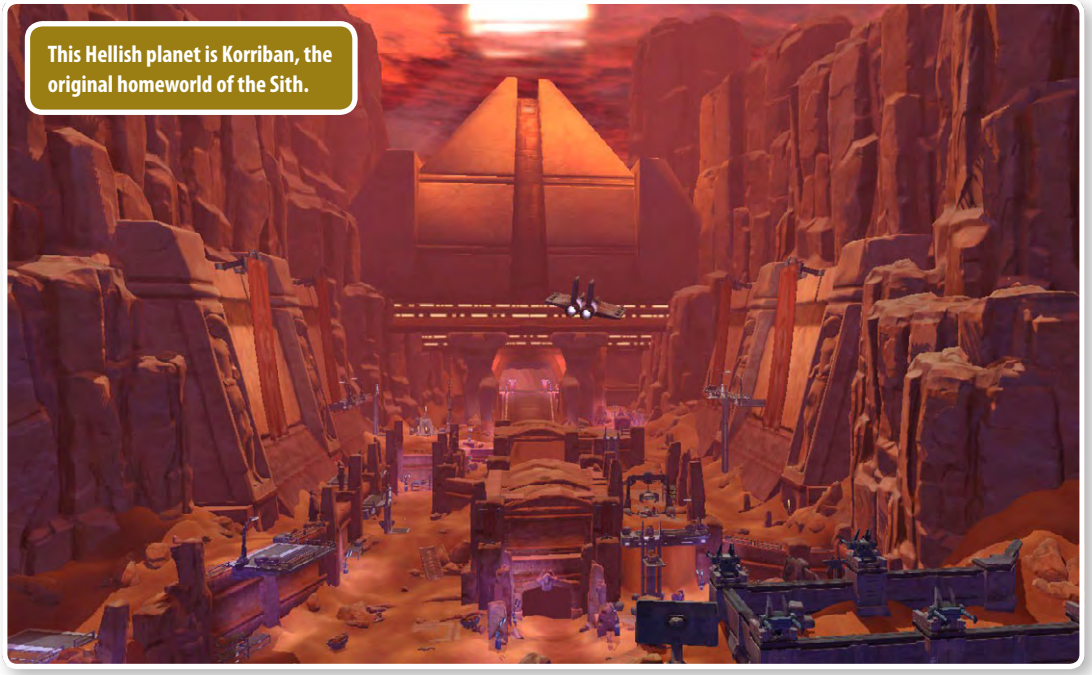
Much you must learn, if Jedi you will be…

> **"You can live out your Boba Fett fantasies by flying into the air and targeting a group of Jedi with a flurry of rockets"**

Already near the top of practically every gamer's most wanted list for 2011, it would seem that, finally, Star Wars: The Old Republic is about to be with us. And, from what we've seen so far, it seems unbelievable that this will be anything less that the game of the year. Why? Well, it's Star Wars for one thing, meaning that you can take the role of a Jedi Knight, Sith, smuggler or bounty hunter (among others). You can learn Force moves as your character progresses, fling enemies around like unwanted dolls or live out your Boba Fett fantasies by flying into the air and targeting a group of Jedi with a flurry of rockets. Excited yet? Oh, you so should be.

BioWare are fully aware that creating an action-packed MMO





This Hellish planet is Korriban, the original homeworld of the Sith.

The Old Republic cont.

for the Star Wars universe is the way forward, and as far as the gameplay is concerned, the clue really is in the name. Fans of the Knights of the Old Republic games can expect the same style of combat gameplay here, while the quests and missions dotted throughout the game promise to be more interesting than the usual 'collect this, kill that' variety.

Set around 300 years after the Knights of the Old Republic games and thousands of years before the films, one of the main focuses of The Old Republic will be on the storyline. More than possibly any MMO we can think of, The Old Republic will take you on a complex, well-structured and involving storyline, where decisions you make have a real difference on the way the game plays. And, best of all, there's a unique story and set of quests for each of the six classes, which technically means that there are six ways of playing through the game.

Star Wars: The Old Republic looks stunning too, with pixel-perfect animation and cut-scenes packed with the sort of drop-dead gorgeous cinematic moments that wouldn't look out of place in the films themselves – head to the video on the previous page for examples of what we mean.

It's clear that The Old Republic is an MMO that's aimed at everyone, from traditional MMO gamers to RPG fans to those who prefer a bit more 'playing' in their RPGs. This could be the MMO that breaks the boundaries and opens up the genre to everyone. And that, at the end of the day, can only be a good thing.

The K'lor'slug is one of the most vicious creatures you'll come across.

This is Tython, the planet on which the Jedi Order originated.

MMOZine Verdict

We can't think of a single reason why The Old Republic won't be utterly stunning

HOW COMPLETE

90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

95%

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Saving the Earth

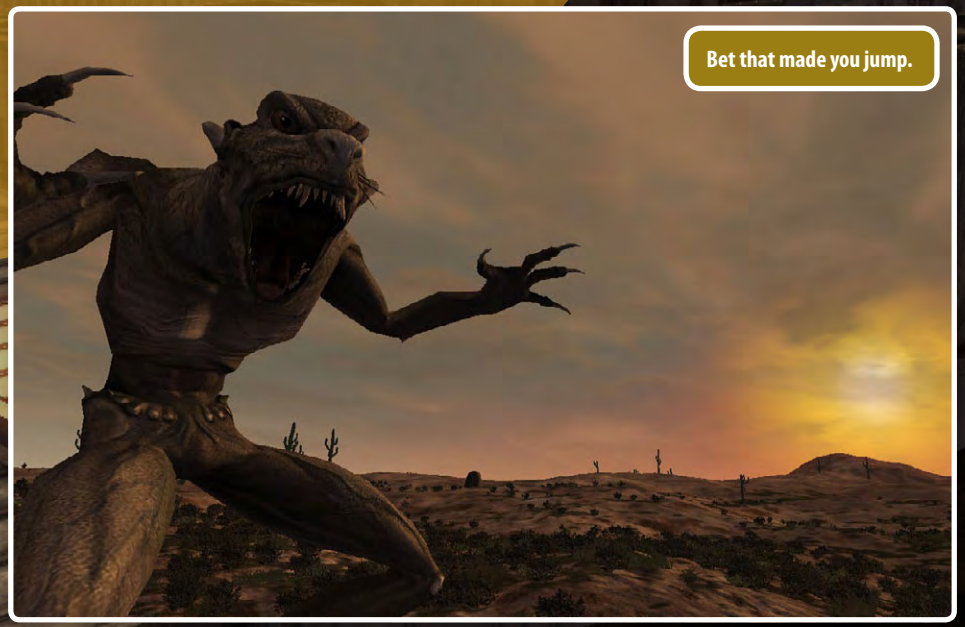
We chat exclusively with Marie Croall, Senior Game Designer for Fallen Earth

"It's much worse to rush content out than to delay it and get it right"

With a review of Fallen Earth in this issue and the retail version now on the shelves in stores, it seemed like a perfect time to fire over a few questions to the developers…

Fallen Earth has only just made it onto store shelves. How important is it for MMOs to be available in both physical and digital forms?
While it does benefit us to have boxes on store shelves, it certainly seems like digital distribution is quickly becoming the standard for the gaming industry. That said, there are also many people who like to buy their games in-store. Therefore, seeing Fallen Earth on the shelf might be their very first look at the game, so we would always like to support the retail channel whenever we can.

Fallen Earth launched in September last year. Over the past 15 months what crucial lessons has the development team learnt about launching and maintaining an MMO?
We've really learned so much since launch. I guess for me the most crucial thing is not to blow an opportunity. It's much worse to rush content out than to delay it and get it right. It sort of becomes an 'easier said than done' type of thing, so it's a lesson that we have to keep reminding ourselves of.


Bet that made you jump.

What is the most bizarre player complaint or bug you've dealt with over that time?
My favourite was the player who sent in a very well-written bug report about a location with missing nodes. He or she included waypoints and descriptions; all very accurate information. At the bottom of the bug report they also included a screenshot of the area with the mission text and area circled in red, scrawled across the bottom of the screenshot it said "node, no nodes… LIES!" The juxtaposition of the incredible details with the screenshot was one of the funniest things that we got in.

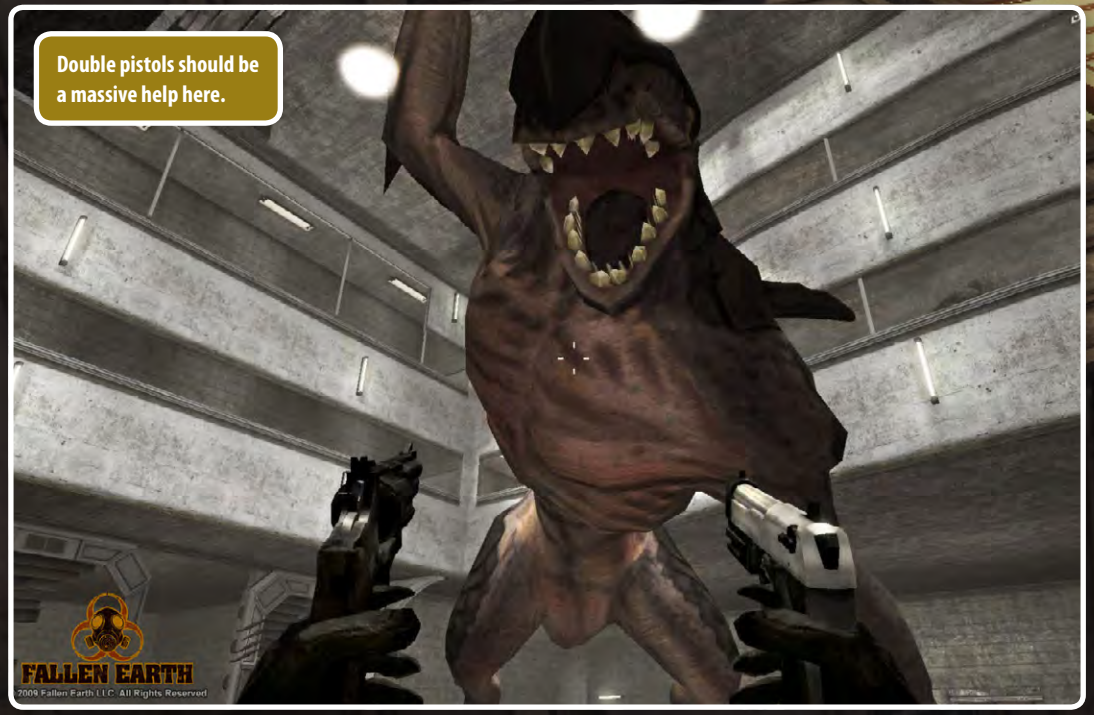
The MMO space seems very hard to penetrate, with many new IPs failing to make their mark. Do you think it has gotten harder over the past year for MMOs in particular to find their audience?
I think it's a very competitive genre. Keeping an audience may be a more difficult task than finding that audience. It's a tough thing to maintain a live game while developing new content, and also players are getting much more sophisticated about their preferences. It's a good thing overall, as it encourages all of us to step it up and get really innovative.

Interview continued

World of Warcraft is still the MMO which all others are judged against. What does Fallen Earth do better than Blizzard's franchise?
Wow, that's sort of like asking what a high school football player does better than an NFL quarterback. The big advantage to having a small team is we can get in the game and interact with players on a very personal level. We know a lot of the players by name – both in game in real life, too. When we get bugs, comments or feedback through email, we can respond to it personally. Sadly, the larger you get, the more you lose that.

A lot of subscription MMOs have now adopted a free-to-play model. Do you ever imagine Fallen Earth doing the same, and what advantages does the subscription model have?
I think that perception is one of the hardest things to overcome when you are talking about a game going free-to-play. Justified or not, it's out there that perhaps the quality of a free-to-play game is lacking, or that the community has

When Clowns Attack!



The costumes are varied and stunning.

Interview continued

deteriorated. Once again I have to preface this with 'justified or not', but with the subscription model there is the feeling that the game is 'worth paying for', that can act as a subconscious upgrade. You can see a bit of an elitist attitude with players, the ones who claim that they would never play a free-to-play game, and I think that's unfortunate. I don't see Fallen Earth going free-to-play, but I think there are a lot of games out there that have raised the bar for games that do opt for that financial model.

The Fallen Earth team seems to be very closely knit. How have the recent lay-offs impacted the MMO's development?

I'm very lucky to work in the environment I do with the people that are here. It is a close group and that's good to see. It could have easily gone the other way. When things are bad at a company, for any reason, the atmosphere can get toxic. The devs here chose to go a different way with that and have created something very cool and unique. As far as development goes, everyone has a very well-defined sense of purpose. We all know that this is business and at the end of the day, we're professionals. Obscene, trash-talking, prank-playing professionals, but professionals nonetheless. The short answer is everyone here is twice as committed to being here, making a bad-ass game and having a good time doing it, as they were before.

"The developers here chose to go a different way and have created something cool and unique"

There literally is nothing scarier than giant spiders.

Eventually, those who went on the Atkins diet decided to complain.

MMO development is a very iterative process, but what do you think Fallen Earth does well and where do you think the game can be fundamentally improved?

I think we can fundamentally improve our iterative process. We need to be more critical of the systems we put out and create enough flexibility in the schedule for revisions on those launched systems.

There's a lot Fallen Earth does right. We have an amazing crafting system and a pretty open-ended classless advancement system.

Operation Combat was the last major expansion pack for Fallen Earth. Are there more on the way and when can fans expect them?

Our first major expansion was actually the Blood Sports expansion in May. We will be releasing Alpha County, the first major part of Sector 4, in the first part of next year.

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10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: GET THE 'GHOSTS IN THE DARK' ACHIEVEMENT IN DARKSHORE (ALLIANCE)

World of Warcraft Retrospective

As the sixth anniversary of World of Warcraft's European launch approaches, we take a look at this history of Blizzard's most popular franchise

Even now, as Deathwing stares at 12 million players from the log-in screen, it seems amazing that a game like World of Warcraft exists. Yet it ticks all the boxes: two warring factions, Orcs, humans, Dwarves, Trolls and Elves to name but a few. Oh and dragons, lots and lots of dragons.

It's been six years since World of Warcraft launched, with the European launch taking place in February 2005, but that not the beginning of the Warcraft story. Oh no, that goes back even further to a game called Warcraft: Orcs and Humans which launched in 1994. A real-time strategy (RTS) game, Warcraft: Orcs and Humans introduced the two side who would later become the heart of the Alliance and Horde. The game introduced a fantasy land

WoW feature cont.

called Azeroth, a land under siege by the Orcs from Draenor during what later lore would call The First War.

Because it was an RTS, Warcraft: Orcs and Humans allowed gamers to play both sides, and completion of each campaign revealed more of the story. It was here that names such as Gul'dan and Medivh were first mentioned, along with notable locations like Stormwind and Blackrock Spire. Not surprisingly, the game was a massive success, and the following year Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness was released to similar acclaim.

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

The storyline continued from the original game with the Orcs again attacking the human race, now based in Lordaeron. The game also focused around the mysterious Dark Portal which allowed the Orcs to travel from their homeworld to Azeroth and was destroyed at the conclusion of the game's expansion set. However, Tides of Darkness also sowed the seeds for World of Warcraft by introducing the Alliance, formed of the humans of Azeroth and their allies, the Elves and the Dwarves, as well as memorable figures such as Anduin Lothar and Orgrim Doomhammer.

The expansion set, Beyond the Dark Portal, completed the storyline as well as offering even more of Azeroth to explore and the first chance to see the world from which the Orcs and their new leader Ner'zhul hail. The expansion introduces heroes of the Alliance – Khadgar, Kurdran Wildhammer, the Paladin Turalyon, Danath Trollbane and Alleria Windrunner – who were believed dead when Draenor imploded and became the shattered realm of Outland.

Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos

In 2002, players returned to Azeroth in Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos. This instalment expanded the number of playable races to include the Night Elves and the Undead Forsaken. It also marked important landmarks in the lives of characters pivotal to the lore of Warcraft: Thrall, Jaina Proudmoore, Cairne Bloodhoof, Tyrande and Malfurion, Illidan, Sylvanas Windrunner, Kel'Thuzzad, Muradin Bronzebear and, of course, Arthas Menethil, the cursed prince

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: DO THE 'PEACEBLOOM VERSUS GHOULS' QUEST CHAIN AND GET YOUR OWN SINGING SUNFLOWER PET IN HILLSBRAD (BOTH)

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: COMPLETE THE 'WELCOME TO THE MACHINE' QUEST CHAIN IN HILLSBRAD (HORDE)

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #1: THRALL

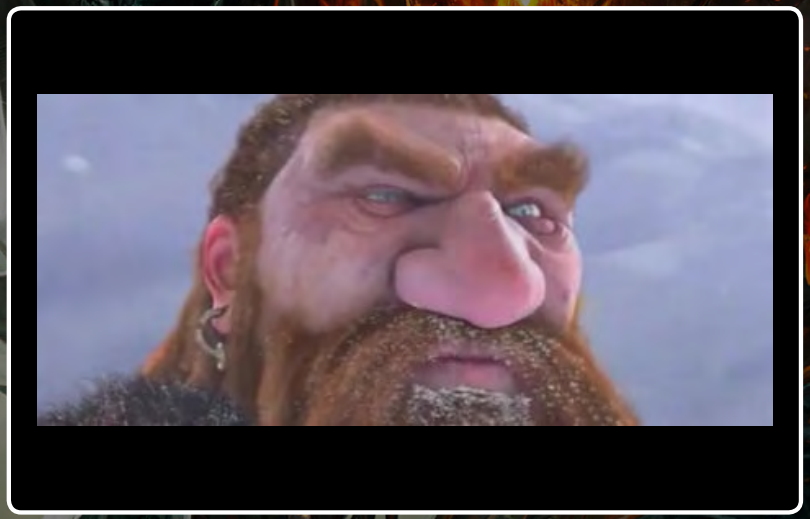
Born as Go'el and future Warchief of the Horde, Thrall was forced to choose between his mantle as leader and his destiny as a Shaman. He now stands atop the Maelstrom, struggling to calm the raging elements and keep a shattered Azeroth in one piece.

Warcraft Orcs and Humans

Though graphically basic, the land of Azeroth and the gameplay of Warcraft II captured players' imaginations.

Westfall
Spellbook
Page 1
Word of Recall
Rain of Fire
Phase Shift
Death Touch
Heal
Ztyra: Your breth is as foul as your thoughts
Torg Bloodfist: You spell like an Orcish Peon!
Ztyra: Orcish peons work hard Torg! They are the backbon
Ztyra: our society. Do not scorn their sacrifice
Ztyra: Arrogant dog
Torg Bloodfist: Bah! They are worms under my feet!
Ztyra: You would crush your own mother if it would make
Ztyra: greater in the eyes of our ancestors

WoW: The original UI was quite different to the one we have now and demonstrates how far the game has come.



WoW feature cont.

who would eventually end up becoming The Lich King.

The focus of the 2003 expansion set, The Frozen Throne, was the aftermath of Warcraft III. The Night Elf campaign focused on Maiev Shadowsong as she chased her former prisoner Illidan through Kalimdor, eventually into Outland. The Alliance campaign centred on the withdrawal of the High Elves (later known as the Blood Elves) from the Alliance, while the Scourge section focused on Arthas' journey to Northrend and Sylvanas' attempts to beat back the Dreadlords and takeover as Queen of the Forsaken and ruler of the Plaguelands.

Finally, the bonus campaign focuses on the Orc migration to Durotar and the creation of what we now know as the Horde. Except this campaign was not like the previous ones, being more similar to the gameplay found in Blizzard's other franchise, Diablo. It also marked the final trip to Azeroth before the release of World of Warcraft.

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: COMPLETE ALL THE NEW LEVEL 80+ ZONES AND ENJOY THE EPIC CONCLUSIONS! (BOTH)

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #2: MALFURION STORMRAGE

Brother to the Betrayer and husband to the wise High Priestess of Elune, Tyrande, Malfurion has only just returned to Azeroth from the Emerald Dream. In-game for the first time, he is simultaneously protecting Darkshore from Deathwing's onslaught and assisting adventurers in Hyjal in resurrecting Azeroth's demigods.

Warcraft III

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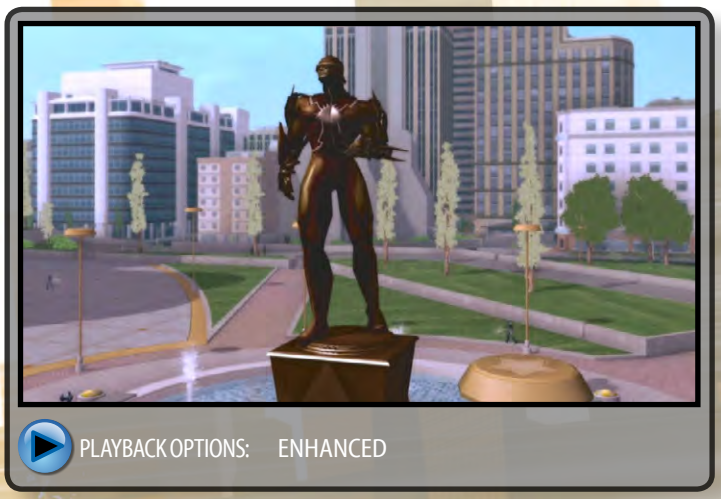

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WoW feature cont.

There was one more game though: Warcraft Adventures: Lord of the Clans. Originally announced in 1997, it was cancelled before release. But, because of the importance of the characters and storyline, the game was resurrected in the form of a novel written by Christie Golden. As a result, Lord of the Clans remains firmly embedded in Warcraft lore because it focuses on the rising star of the Horde and the poster-Orc for Warcraft: Thrall. Thrall, an Orc raised in captivity to be the perfect warrior, eventually found his freedom and discovered his shamanistic destiny, becoming the Horde's Warchief.

The game featured an impressive cast list, with Clancy Brown voicing Thrall while Optimus Prime himself Peter Cullen took the roll of Orgrim Doomhammer. However the draw of this game, because it was quite different in style from any other instalment of the Warcraft franchise, was that it was animated. Surviving trailers show a kind of animation reminiscent to Dragon's Lair, and screenshots also show Thrall sparring with the Dragon Queen Alexstrasza and Deathwing smoking a hookah. Unfortunately, the game was cancelled in 1998 but has remained a part of Warcraft mythos, even if all that remains are press releases, screenshots and the odd trailer.

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: KILL HOGGER IN THE STOCKADES (ALLIANCE)

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: LISTEN TO THELDURIN'S TALL TALES AS PART OF 'THE DAY DEATHWING CAME' IN THE BADLANDS (BOTH)

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #3: SYLVANAS, THE BANSHEE QUEEN

Once Ranger General of Silvermoon, Sylvanas was murdered, tortured and resurrected by Arthas as he rampaged towards the Sunwell. Her free will was eventually restored and she was proclaimed leader of the Forsaken but her grudge against Arthas remained, even after he became the Lich King. She eventually aided adventurers in assaulting Arthas during the five-man Wrath dungeons in Icecrown Citadel. Now she is using Val'kyr to restore the Forsaken's falling numbers, but how far will she go?

The Burning Crusade gave adventurers the chance to step into Azeroth's past and revisit important events touched upon in the Warcraft games.

NOT JUST A GAME

Blizzard has a long history of expanding their universes beyond just a computer game – after all, look at Lord of the Clans. Books have been an important part of covering lore that players might not be exposed to in-game. Most recently, Blizzard and TOKYOPOP teamed up to publish a series of across the Warcraft and StarCraft universes, and this included creating brand-new characters like Kalec and Anveena who later appeared in-game and actually became integral to the lore. This branched out to an official comic and more novels.

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: SAVE SOME CUTE BEARS UP TREES IN HYJAL (BOTH)

WoW feature cont.

World of Warcraft

World of Warcraft was announced back in September 2001, a departure from previous games as it would bring Azeroth into the realm of a massively multiplayer online game. Promising the chance for gamers to take on the role as members of the Horde and the Alliance, classic or vanilla WoW as the game is now known, offered four races per faction. Alliance could play as humans, Dwarves, Night Elves and Gnomes, while the Horde offered a choice of Orcs, Trolls, the undead Forsaken and the bovine Tauren.

The game went into closed Beta in February 2004 and launched later that year in November in the US, officially launching in Europe on February 11th 2005. Suddenly you could go anywhere in Azeroth and see this immersive world, becoming an active part of its legend and lore, so it's no real surprise that the game took off and even the Corrupted Blood plague of that September didn't put people off.

The Burning Crusade

By October 2005, BlizzCon was in full swing and WoW's first expansion, The Burning Crusade, was announced. In January 2007 it launched, and offered a whole plethora of content including the shattered realm of Outland, playable races in the form of the exiled Draenei and the magic-addicted Blood Elves. The expansion also introduced flying mounts, new

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #4: VARIAN WRYNN

Varian Wrynn was missing for Stormwind for a while, and his story was told in the official comic which detailed how he was abducted, lost his memory and forced to fight as a gladiator. Now returned as the rightful ruler, he leads the Alliance in a post-Lich King age and grooms his son Anduin for the throne.

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #5: THRALL

Once the Aspect of Earth Neltharian, the great black dragon was slowly driven to madness by the Old Gods vile whisperings. Renamed Deathwing, the dragon decimated the Blue flights and captured Alexstrasza for her eggs. Eventually beaten back to Deepholm, he had recently re-emerged as a burning creature of hate, held together by elementium plates and vowing destruction on Azeroth.

Wrath of the Lich King introduced the icy realm of Northrend, home of the Lich King.

But not all of the land was cold. This is one of the Dragonshrines, an oasis in a frozen dragon graveyard.

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The Shattering was the perfect opportunity for Azeroth to become flyable, and for the capitals to get a makeover.

The Halls of Origination features Titanic bosses based on Egyptian mythology. This is Isiset, Construct of Magic.

WoW feature cont.

dungeons and raids, a level cap of 70 and the chance to face off and beat both Illidan and Kil'Jaeden.

Wrath of the Lich King

The announcement of the next expansion, Wrath of the Lich King, followed later that year during BlizzCon. This expansion returned players to Azeroth, to the previously inaccessible northern climes of Northrend to face off against the Lich King himself. The level cap was raised to 80, with even faster mounts, new dungeons and raids, outdoor PvP in the form of Wintergrasp, there was a new neutral city in the form of Dalaran, the hero Death Knight class, Achievements, Inscription and even the Barbershop!

Around this time, Blizzard started ramping up marketing with TV spots, refer-a-friend schemes and expanding into new territories. The game soon became very popular around the world, with over 12 million players as of October 2010.

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: RIDE A ROCKET-PROPELLED ROCKETWAY RAT AS PART OF 'AZSHARITE EXPERIMENT NO. 2' (HORDE)

Blizzard also introduced localised versions of the game in China, Russia and Brazil to name but a few.

Blizzard announced the third and latest expansion, Cataclysm,

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: REVISIT SHADOWFANG KEEP AND DEADMINES IN HEROIC MODE (BOTH)

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #6: RAGNAROS

Ragnaros has a place in the heart of every classic WoW player. Only the bravest found their way into Ragnaros' lair, deep in Molten Core, to face the Firelord, the master of the planes of fire known as the Firelands. He was defeated but not completely destroyed, and raised by Deathwing within Hyjal to help the dragon destroy the World Tree, Nordrassil. You, aided by Malfurion and company, must beat him back to whence he came.

WoW feature cont.

in August 2009 – despite the details leaking onto the Internet weeks before the official announcement.

Cataclysm

Cataclysm revitalised the classic world of Azeroth by destroying it. Deathwing was announced to be returning and causing chaos and destruction in his wake. The world of Azeroth underwent a Shattering which re-ignited the war between the Horde and the Alliance, zones shifted between factions, and players finally gained the ability to fly in Azeroth (excluding the TBC starting areas). The game lore was brought up to date with updated starter zones and Trolls and Gnomes finally got their own areas.

THE MOVERS AND SHAKERS OF AZEROTH #7: GENN GREYMANE

The King of Gilneas, Genn and his people have been in self-isolation for years until the Shattering broke down the Wall protecting their land and the Forsaken decided to expand their territories. Now, like so many of his kin, a Worgen, Genn fought for his land but was eventually forced to retreat after the death of his son. His people rejoined the Alliance and he now stands beside Varian Wrynn in Stormwind and his people in Darnassus.

10 THINGS TO DO IN CATACLYSM: LEARN ARCHEOLOGY FROM HARRISON JONES HIMSELF! (ALLIANCE)

High-level players were given new zones to explore, including the elemental plane of Deepholm and the previously inaccessible area of Hyjal. The largest zone in the game (Vashj'ir) was also the most ground-breaking, being completely underwater, while players could go head-to-head with the Twilight Cultists in the Twilight Highlands, or follow Harrison Jones into the unexplored depths of Uldum. Following on from the success of Wintergrasp, Blizzard also introduced Tol Barad, an outdoor PvP zone and quest hub that was only accessible to player of 85, the new level cap.

The future

So what does the future hold for Azeroth? Well, we're just starting the Cataclysm storyline but we can expect the next expansion to be announced later this year at BlizzCon, although it's unlikely to launch before 2012. Cataclysm has been a roaring success, selling over 4.7 million units in just 30 days, so while there are other MMOs out there, WoW remains top dog with a bright future ahead of it for a long time to come.

The Twilight Highlands is a battleground between the Red Dragonflight, mortals and the Twilight's Hammer.

Gilneas, a mysterious land to the south of Silverpine, has been overrun by top-hat wearing Worgen!

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World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

> "Every aspect of the game we know has changed, from the starting experiences to the zones themselves"

A strange new world

Everything we knew about Azeroth has changed – the world, the people in it and a new foe in the form of the Aspect of Death, who has arisen to challenge the champions of the Horde and the Alliance. Indeed, Deathwing is a daily presence in the lives of all the denizens of Azeroth as he appears in the sky and rains down fire upon an unprepared world.

Deathwing's return restored the people of Gilneas – now transformed into Worgen – to the Alliance fold. The Druids of Darnassus have taught them how to master the beast inside and allowed them a measure of choice when it comes to their forms. On the other side of the world, the Goblin isle of Kezan was destroyed in the Shattering and its people enslaved by their corrupt Trade Prince. For their part in rescuing Thrall, who was on his way to the Maelstrom when he was abducted by S:I7, they joined the Horde and were given a new home in Aszhara.

Every aspect of the game we know and love has changed, from the starting experiences to the zones themselves. Lore has advanced and there is a whole new set of zones, dungeons and raid encounters to enjoy. Added to that you have five more levels to advance and even more factions to become exalted with. Cataclysm looks and feels brilliant but, sadly, since its release the game has unfortunately been plagued by a series of hotfixes and class balances deployed almost on a daily basis.

Despite this so much of the game is done well. Rolling a new toon has

Each capital city has a set of portals leading to the new Cataclysm zones.

Harrison Ford waits in Stormwind Keep to educate his students and wannabe Archeologists.

In Deepholm, players have to help the Earthen Ring restore the World Pillar.

ARCHEOLOGY 101

Archeology is the newest secondary profession. Like fishing or cooking, it can be learned by anyone, and while it takes some time, there are some nice rewards to be had. Once you learn it from a trainer, like Harrison Ford in Stormwind Keep, dig sites show up on your map. There are four per continent, and as you survey the area, you can create artefacts. The best part is there are some really epic Bind to Account items, including mounts and companion pets. We mentioned these are BoA, right? Archeology is designed as something you can do to kill time, while waiting for the Dungeon Finder or for a raid to start but it's definitely an interesting way for higher toons to re-explore parts of Azeroth they might not have visited in a while.

WoW: Cataclysm cont.

never been so much fun with the entirely of Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms having undergone a drastic revamp, zones have shifted sides, devastation has been wrought and Azeroth is no longer the world we knew and loved. That said, the best part is the structure. You're now guided from zone to zone, with a board in Stormwind and Orgrimmar notifying you when new zones are unlocked. Each has its own storyline, with an epic conclusion at the end. This can be cinematics or lorefests, and really manage to keep you engaged. This also means the game feels more organic and more ordered than before.

The new high-level zones are each unique and beautiful, from Egyptian-themed Uldum and watery Vashj'ir to the fractured Twilight Highlands, the depths of Deepholm and the Druid-centric area of Mount Hyjal. Wherever you go though, Deathwing is a constant presence. Periodically, just when you least expect it, he will swoop through a zone and incinerate anything and everybody in his path, including hapless players and those who desire a juicy Achievement, even if it comes with a repair bill.

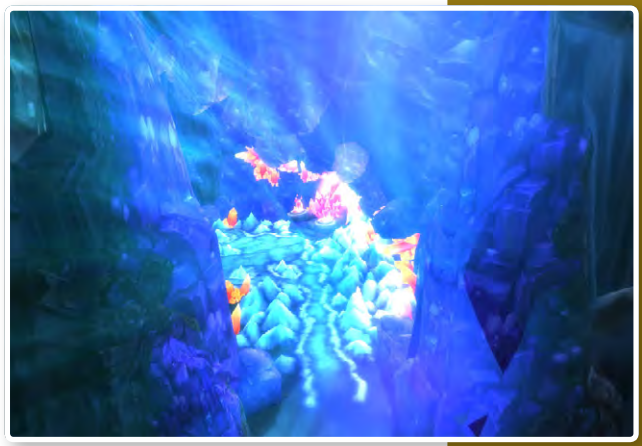
All the new zones are self- contained and once you unlock the portals in your faction's capital, you're free to come and go as you please. The questlines are immersive and no expense has been spared when it comes to the cinematics, even if there is some inconsistency between which NPCs have audio files. Even

WHAT AN ACHIEVEMENT

Achievements remain a key part of the game, and you get them for everything from completing a number of quests to doing some really quirky things…

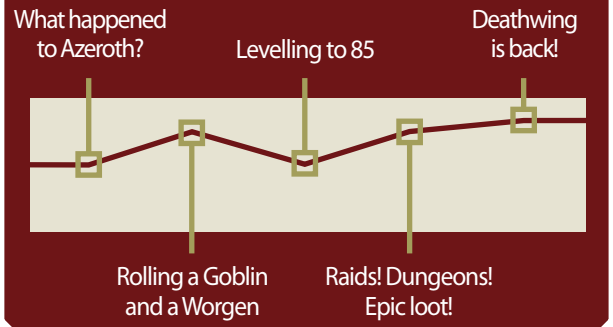
QUESTS AND DUNGEONS | TRAMPOLINE | GUILDS

You can get them for doing quests and dungeons.



This is Therazane, she doesn't like you. You killed her daughter so you're really gonna have to earn those enchants.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



WoW: Cataclysm cont.

better, the zones are vast but the quests and NPCs gently guide you so you can explore new areas and flight points as you go.

When it comes to experience, it doesn't take that long to hit 85. If you do every quest, you should ding somewhere between Vashj'ir and Hyjal but the temptation to go straight to Uldum or Twilight Highlands is pretty hard to ignore. Then what? Well there's Tol Barad – Cataclysm's inferior and hotfixed incarnation of Wintergrasp – for a little PvP.

The main game also features several new factions with which to grind and there are a series of new instances including the Throne of Tides, Grim Batol and the Stonecore, However, if you're expecting to be able to zip through them in 10 minutes, you're in for a shock, as they are – even on normal mode – very hard. Unlocking heroics also takes a bit of work and isn't just as simple as finding the entrance and doing the normal run. Oh no, you have to have an average gear level now. Similarly, raiding is not going to be a walk in the park. Cataclysm comes with plenty to choose from but it is one tough cookie.

Anyone expecting Cataclysm to be as easy as Wrath is in for a shock. Cataclysm, like Azeroth, is a whole new ball game. A scarred, imperfect but addictive look at a whole new world where everything is that little bit bleaker and unfriendly. Cataclysm is the best expansion yet but it would have benefited, we think, from a little longer in development. Parts of it just aren't as polished as you'd expect from a company like Blizzard. Fortunately, like precious gems, games can be cut and polished over time, and to their credit Blizzard is trying to rectify all the bits they just didn't have the time to finish. A shame true, especially given the near-daily list of changes, but overall it's a great expansion let down by the need to get it out there now rather than soon.

MMOZine Verdict

Cataclysm still manages to shatter expectations

- ✓ Immersive zones and lore
- ✓ Everything is new!
- ✗ Feels unfinished and inconsistent in places

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Roll a Goblin and explore Kezan and the beautiful Lost Isles.

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Vashj'ir is so massive, you get a free seahorse mount in order to travel around.

15 HOURS
Try a little Archeology and re-explore Azeroth.

1 WEEK
By now you should ding 85 and join your faction in taking Tol Barad.

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Fallen Earth

Making the most out of the nuclear holocaust

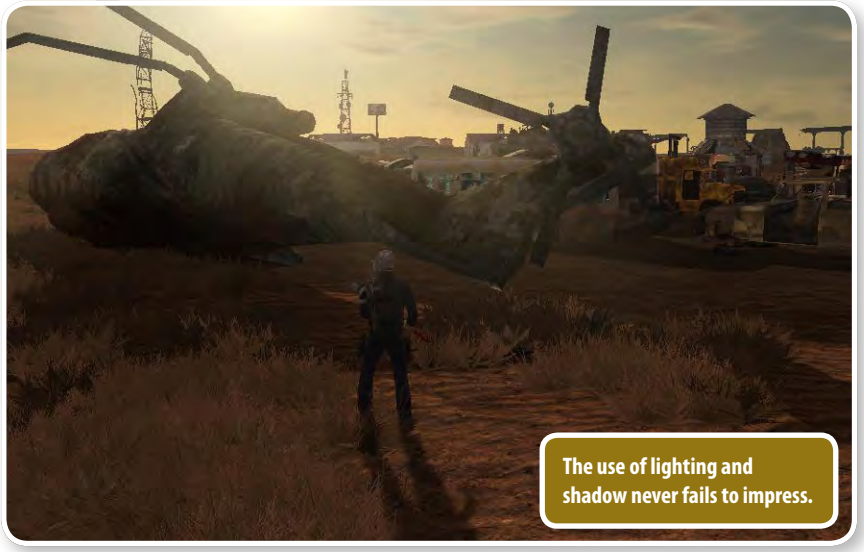
> **"This is a far cry from Azeroth or Tyria, and despite being on the market for well over a year, this earthy experience still feels fresh and unique"**

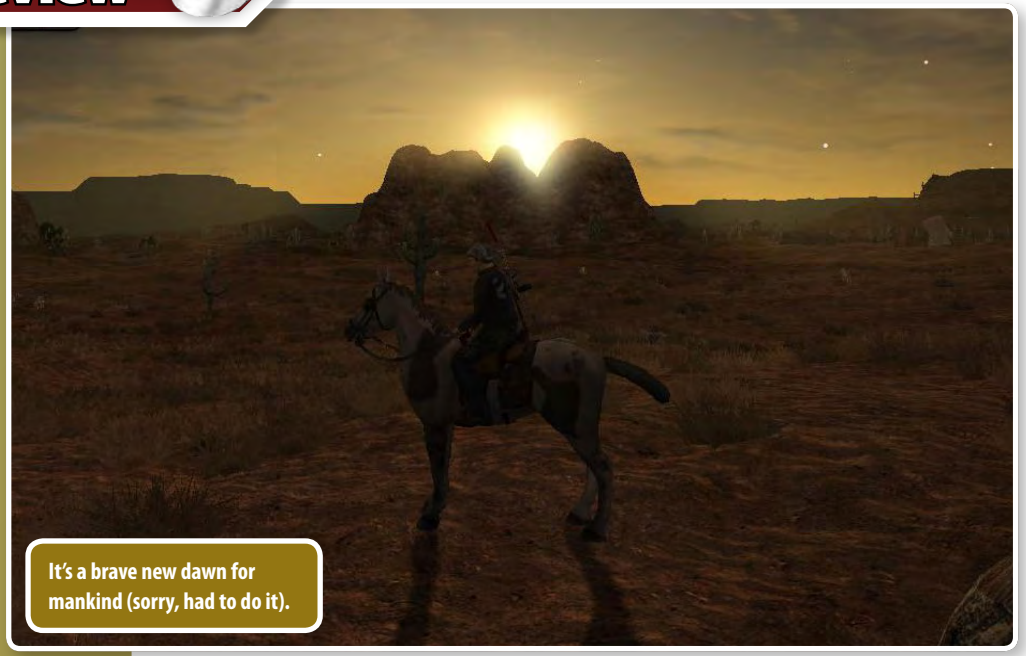
Creating an apocalyptic wasteland for the setting of any MMO is always a massive challenge, especially one which is as grounded in reality as Fallen Earth is. Unlike Blizzard or NCsoft, the team in North Carolina can't rely on flying mounts, Orcs or magical weapons to vary up their MMO's experience. Instead everything is geared towards the struggle of survival, the chaos of post-nuclear holocaust and the battles between six warring factions all attempting to seize power. This is a far cry from Azeroth or Tyria, and despite being on the market for well over a year, this earthy experience still feels fresh and unique.

Launched in September 2009, Fallen Earth is still a newcomer on the MMO scene, but thankfully most of the issues which plagued the game's opening months have been rectified with no floating NPCs, unbalanced combat or insufferable lag.

The way Fallen Earth's world is introduced to players is just as pitch perfect as before and manages to hold players' hands just long enough as to not insult their intelligence. The prologue set inside the Hoover Dam does a fantastic job of clarifying your origins as a clone created by the mysterious GlobalTech corporation in the year 2156, and includes escaping your would-be prison to save any friendlies still trapped in the facility. This segment was much more fast paced and guided than we're used to, but it works, and introduces all of the key concepts necessary to understand your life outside of the compound. It's here where one of Fallen Earth's greatest assets is revealed, the first-person combat structure. Split into two parts, players have a choice of either selecting melee- or projectile-based weaponry, with damage against enemies dependent on what part of their body you hit. For gaming as a whole this isn't new, but in MMOs it's a rare find and makes skirmishes in Fallen Earth much more satisfying. If you hit a victim in the head, you know you're going to cause much more damage.

There's still plenty of people mulling around in the wasteland.


The use of lighting and shadow never fails to impress.



It's a brave new dawn for mankind (sorry, had to do it).

What wasteland doesn't have its own unique set of hideously mutated wildlife?

Fallen Earth cont.

The sheer amount of weaponry on offer is also staggering, with a wide array of rifles, pistols, shotguns, crossbows and even the almighty rocket launcher all making an appearance. There are close-range options too, but smashing an enemy in the face with a handy sledgehammer isn't anywhere near as satisfying as picking them off from a distance with a sniper rifle.

Make your own

Crafting is this franchise's other main attraction, and even though this concept is common in other MMOs, the way Fallen Earth approaches it is genuinely revolutionary. Almost everything from buggies, weapons, armour, potions and poisons can be created from hundreds of different components collected from the wasteland. This is where the survival aspect comes in, because even though most things can be bought from NPCs, it is usually much more satisfying to go and farm resources such as copper, water, steel and iron from the wasteland yourself and craft them using recipes.

The wasteland is littered with thousands of different plants, hives and salvage piles to harvest. It isn't just about random drops, because as soon as your nature skills are up to the appropriate level, players can predict what they'll yield from any specific target. Constructing items doesn't take long and thankfully you can go about your business while the magic is happening. Creating something new from what is effectively a load of junk is very satisfying.

New skills can also be learned via manuals earned during quests or bought from vendors, but everything is governed by the complicated level and AP system. All skills are governed by core character traits such as Intelligence, Perception, Agility, etc. and attributes can also be increased by targeting specific skills. This is an

This MMO definitely has the 'Mad Max' vibe going for it.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life

Fallen Earth cont.

interesting idea, however it can confuse advancement early on, as it's very hard to tell whether you're moving your character in the direction you want it to. go The opening 10 hours are also a little overwhelming as the initial quests are so craft heavy, that you are usually tasked with just making items for one vendor after the next. This is necessary as you should at least try every different crafting skill once, nevertheless it can feel like a slog. This is further compounded by a lack of teleport or fast travel points between settlements, and a heavy reliance on mounts to cover the vast distances between towns. The trick is to mix up quests with plenty of exploration while keeping risks to the minimum, as slogging back to the mount retrieval point is a pain. After you get the hang of this balancing act, Fallen Earth becomes a real joy with a fascinating world to explore.

The landscape here may appear somewhat bleak, but beneath the rusted cars and decrepit buildings contained in the initially drab and dreary sector is a very accomplished MMO which has all the functionality required in a modern day MMO – like a waypoint-supported mini-map, clan contests and faction system – as well as three gigantic sectors which get even more interesting as you venture into them.

Now that all the launch kinks have finally been ironed out, this is one wasteland that you'll surely relish spending many, many hours in, and it's an easy recommendation to any gamer who wants to sample a gaming experience that is truly original.

BLOOD SPORTS

From level five onwards, combatants in Fallen Earth can elect to take part in PvP skirmishes for up to 16 players. Currently there are four different match types on offer: deathmatch, capture the flag, assault and a wave-based survival mode. Your level determines what opposition you're up against, and players can queue up indefinitely until rosters are filled. There is a menu-based queue system, so you don't have to stop questing while you wait.

MMOZine Verdict

As rewarding as it is addictive. Great stuff

- Very polished
- Revolutionary crafting system
- Thriving and welcoming community

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RIFT

With the release date rapidly approaching for this exciting new MMO, we bring you an in-depth feature that tells you everything you need to know!

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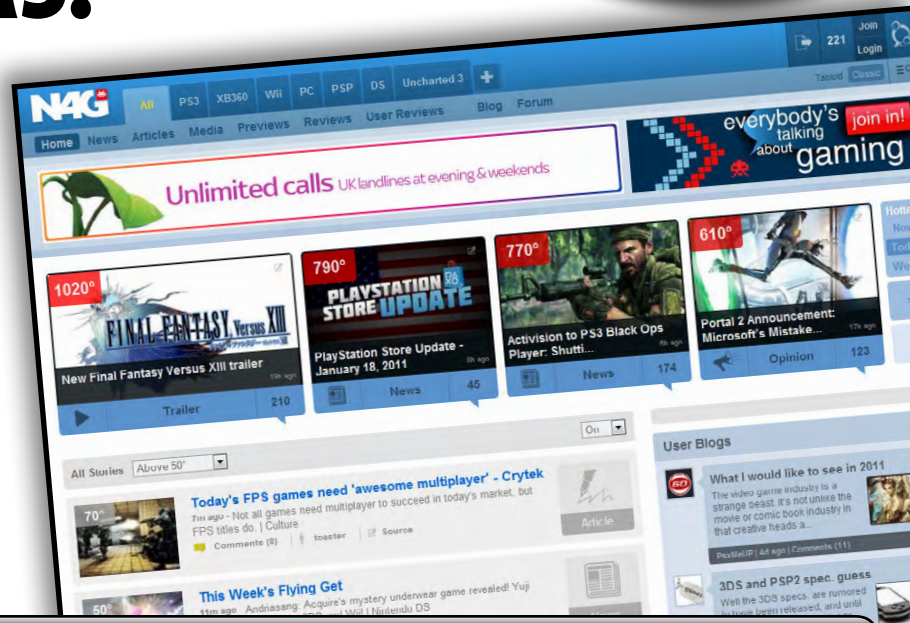
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